



## Office of Management's Monthly Newsletter

# The Beacon

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Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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**bea-con** (bê' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

### FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

#### Review of District Offices

*By Tom Billy*

Over the last few months, I have had the opportunity to talk with District Managers and a number of District Office employees. A concern that I hear frequently relates to district offices and their ability to respond to ongoing and, at times, increasing demands with current resources. We have been in our current structure for nearly four years, and I believe it is an appropriate time to take a look at the structure of district offices to ensure that they are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible. I believe the timing is also appropriate as we move into FSIS Next Steps; and is consistent with the Administration's intentions to review the allocation of resources.

I have, therefore, asked that a group be convened to review the role and functions of the district offices. Marlin Waller will lead the work group, which will include representatives from Field Operations Headquarters, district offices, the Resource Management and Planning Staff, OPPDE, Human Resources Division, and the Workforce of the Future Steering Committee. It will also draw on others, as needed, from Field Operations, OPHS, NJC, ATSP, NAFV, AISD, and the Resource Management Coordination Team (RMCT) for resource support, as needed.

The focus of this group will be district office functions, and how support is received from other parts of the Agency. This group will be asked to provide specific recommendations to improve the efficiency of the district offices; short- and long-term options for implementing recommendations; and a plan for follow up on implementation, and any questions that remain outstanding. I am also asking that the group identify any related issues that surface in the process and provide recommendations on methods and priorities to address other areas identified. This effort is beginning in late February, and recommendations are expected by May 18.

### RON'S CORNER

#### Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention

*By Ron Hicks*

*Deputy Administrator, Office of Management*

As an agency, we've made a number of strides to increase awareness of Workplace Violence, and what we can do about it. The Workplace Violence Task Force and additional Workplace Violence Coordinator positions have been established, both in the field and in headquarters. We are working with the Millbank Memorial Fund, a fully endowed, self-supporting organization dedicated to public health, to look at Workplace Violence from a broad perspective. Agency officials have met with Millbank officials several times over the past 3 months to further develop this relationship. A Workplace Violence Prevention video has been distributed to all Circuit Supervisors for presentation at Work Unit Meetings.

The Workplace Violence task force includes 25 representatives from all major program areas of FSIS, including the employee representative groups (NJC, ATSP and NAFV). The task force has identified 5 primary tasks, including:

1. Identify possible causes, risk areas, and threats,

2. Identify critical aspects of our functions that could unintentionally contribute to workplace violence,
3. Identify precautions and steps that employees can take that are preventive in nature,
4. Develop both short and long term recommendations to resolve workplace conflicts, and
5. Develop an implementation plan.

The task force has also provided a comprehensive list of recommendations in the following ten (10) categories:

1. Culture change - develop specialists to coordinate training, etc.
2. Develop a database in order to analyze the scope of the problem and strategies.
3. Benchmarking what actions/steps other organizations have taken that work.
4. Employee security and safety.
5. Establish a whistleblower line for workplace violence.
6. Secure appropriate funding.
7. Improve communication in general, including establishment of a Hotline with Web Site access.
8. Training and Education.
9. Develop a system approach (clear, organized approach to follow through on cases).
10. Criminal and civil penalties and reporting to appropriate law enforcement officials.

We, as an agency, must take a multi-faceted approach to workplace violence, and we need to include industry in the approach. We need to provide comfort to individuals in reporting incidents and comfort in their knowledge that there is follow-up to reporting. We need to equip our employees with skills to recognize violent situations, to de-escalate confrontation, achieve resolution and to look at options/alternatives to violence.

This month's feature article was submitted by Inspector Robert Holloway, a member of the Workplace Violence Assessment Team from the Salem District. This article also appears in the February issue of the *Salem District Capsule*, an FSIS Employee Wellness Newsletter.

### **Feature Article - Workplace Violence and FSIS**

*By Robert Holloway, CSI,  
WPV Assessment Team, Salem District  
Telephone: 541-461-6388*

*Workplace Violence!* What does that phrase bring to mind?

There's the common definition from the media: An armed, disgruntled employee or client who enters the workplace and guns down, either selectively or indiscriminately, employees, supervisors and managers.

Studies show, however, that the real threat workers face is better embodied by this definition from the *Workplace Violence Research Institute*: "Any act against an employee that creates a hostile work environment and negatively affects the employee, either physically or psychologically". This includes all types of physical or verbal assaults, threats, coercion, intimidation and all forms of harassment.

#### *Types of Workplace Violence*

*Type I:* The perpetrator has no legitimate relationship to the workplace. In this type, the perpetrator usually enters the workplace to commit a criminal act. Robbery is an example. FSIS employees have been victims of several Type I incidents. The most common threats to us from this type would be road rage or a mugging on the way to an assignment. An FSIS inspector was recently the victim of a carjacking. This was a Type I incident. You may face an increased risk of Type I violence if you cover assignments that sell retail to the public, as robbery of the store is then a possibility.

*Type II:* The perpetrator is either the recipient or the object of a service provided by the workplace. This type has been widely reported by FSIS employees and is a major concern. An example of this type would be when a plant employee or person directly connected with the establishment assaults, threatens or harasses the inspector. Report all Type II incidents on FSIS form 4735.4

*Type III:* The perpetrator has an employment-related involvement with the workplace. Examples: A current or former FSIS employee, or someone who has a relationship with them, like a spouse or a relative, instigates the violent act.

One of the major risk factors FSIS inspectors confront is that we control a person or company's future, their financial well-being, and possibly even their ability to stay in business. Other risk factors could include; shift work, especially in high crime areas, driving on the job, government-identified vehicles (in areas known for strong anti-government sentiment), a high-stress work environment and terrorist acts or threats from animal rights or anti-government groups.

So, what is causing the rise in workplace violence? Experts suggest there are many reasons:

- An overall increase in tolerance of violence in our society.
- Increased accessibility to weapons.
- Substance abuse.
- Psychological factors, including stress and breakdown of community support systems (such as supportive families or extended family groups).

The costs of workplace violence are high, and there are many hidden costs such as:

- Loss of morale and increased stress.
- Lower productivity in victims of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Higher workers' compensation rates.
- Negative publicity (think of the Post Office)
- Hardship to victim's family.

So, what can FSIS inspectors do to reduce workplace violence incidents or severity?

- *Act in a professional manner.*

Avoid using foul language, off-color jokes or belittling remarks. Treat co-workers and plant personnel with dignity, fairness and respect. By doing this you are then in a position to expect and demand that the same treatment be afforded to you.

- *Keep your cool.*

When you are involved in a confrontational situation, take time to cool down so your emotions are under control. Be prepared to justify your decisions and actions. Remember that if you take an enforcement action, the plant has a right to question it and even appeal it to your supervisor. Expect it, and act professionally. Don't take a company's appeal of your inspection decision as a personal affront.

- *Report all incidents*

Intimidation, harassment, assault, threats or interference should be reported to your supervisor or the Workplace Violence Coordinator. As seemingly minor incidents can escalate into more serious situations, it is important to take action early.

- *Keep yourself informed*

Be familiar with the Agency's Workplace Violence Policies, Guidelines and reporting procedures.

- *Use the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).*

If you observe disturbing incidents or drastic behavior changes in a co-worker, report it to your supervisor. While these may not be indicators of violent behavior, people under extreme stress do show personality changes and may need help. Remember we all have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These people employ professional counselors who maintain strict confidentiality. Help is available not only for you the employee, but also for close family members.

You are this Agency's most valuable asset. Recognize your worth, get informed on workplace violence and think about how you would react in various scenarios involving violence in your workplace.

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**PROCUREMENT**

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**Hey, Big Spenders!**

*By Julie Adams & Janet Elm, Administrative Services Division  
Telephone: 301-504-3993*

The Purchase Card Program Coordinators for FSIS would like to take a few minutes to review some important regulations concerning our ever-popular Purchase Card Program.

As you know, the Government Purchase Card is similar to a personal credit card, except it authorizes the user to buy products and services, within delegated limits and for official use only. *But, please note* - the card is an obligating instrument, just like a Purchase Order, and is subject to Federal and Departmental procurement regulations. See the Departmental Regulation (DR) 5013-6 for specifics. As such, it is important to remember that the card is assigned to an individual user, not a division, branch or section. It bears the user's name and authorized obligations *may only be made by that person*.

If you are a purchase cardholder, no one else is authorized to use your card. Loaning your card or your card number to anyone, including your supervisor, is a violation of Federal regulations and may result in the termination of your account. You must protect your card and card number, as you would protect your personal credit card accounts. You are responsible for all purchases made with your purchase card. This responsibility includes financial liability and possible disciplinary action for any improper procurements, card misuse, or fraud.

You were delegated specific procurement authority when you were issued the purchase card. The delegation is in the form of single and monthly purchase card limits. With that delegation comes some serious responsibilities. You are accountable for all procurement actions made using your card. These actions must be carried out and documented with the highest standards of conduct. To ensure the integrity of each procurement you must:

1. Make sure all purchases are made for official Government use and fall within the stated authorized uses of the card.
2. Only purchase items or services that fall within you delegated limits, being careful not to split your requirements to avoid those limits.
3. Document each transaction with a charge slip, packing slip, invoice and any other pertinent information obtained for making the purchase.
4. Verify that funds are available before you make a purchase.
5. Make sure the contractor accepts the purchase card or convenience checks before making the purchase and the total amount of the order will not exceed your purchase authority.
6. Reconcile each transaction promptly and completely in PCMS, including detailed purchase descriptions and valid accounting and budget object codes.
7. And, most importantly, know and understand the regulations that govern each purchase you make.

Keep in mind, the card is now the preferred method of acquiring goods and services that are \$2,500.00 or less. And if the contractor accepts the purchase card, convenience checks should not be used.

The Purchase Card benefits the Agency by reducing procurement and related paperwork costs, by eliminating the need for separate imprest fund accounts, by reducing Purchase Order transactions, and by allowing program personnel to obtain inexpensive, everyday items and services in a timely and efficient manner. But the Program will only succeed if you, the cardholder, take the responsibilities associated with the Purchase Card seriously.

If you wish to obtain a copy of the DR 5013-6, you may access it through the following website address: <http://www.usda.gov/procurement/card/guide.html>. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your authority, responsibilities, or the PCMS system, please contact Janet Elm, your Agency Program Coordinator, at 301-504-3993. She is there to help you make the Purchase Card an important and useful tool for your program area.

## VDIP

**The Conflict Resolution Process - Step 3 - Discussing the Issues**

*By Milo Christianson, LERD*  
*Telephone: 612-370-2000*

This is the third article in a series of articles dealing with a conflict resolution process that individuals can use to resolve their disagreements without the use of a third party intervenor. The first two steps in this process – *Arranging the Meeting* and *Opening the Meeting* – were discussed in earlier issues of the Beacon. In this issue, we will look at Step 3 – *Discussing the Issues*.

To facilitate a successful discussion of issues that are central to a conflict, there are a number of things that should be done. They are:

- *Adhere to the Ground Rules.*

As noted in Step 2, conflict resolution will be much easier and effective if the disputants can agree upon certain ground rules to guide their discussion. These rules may include such things as, (1) no one will withdraw from the conversation for a specified period of time, (2) the details of the conversation will remain confidential, (3) everyone will remain open and honest, (4) opinion and feelings will be supported by facts and examples, and (5) everyone will be given an opportunity to speak without interruption. The parties task in Step 3 is to make certain that each adheres to the previously discussed ground rules.

- *Practice Active Listening.*

Both parties need to practice active listening – that is, they need to be involved in the conversation as both speakers and listeners. Active listeners refrain from judging the speaker's message, and instead focus on understanding his/her point of view. To gain understanding, the active listener uses certain active listening techniques. These techniques may include such things as,

- (1) asking clarifying questions,
- (2) asking for and giving feedback,
- (3) paraphrasing (repeating what someone says in different and perhaps fewer words),
- (4) summarizing, and a variety of similar techniques.

The purpose of each technique is to demonstrate involvement and gain understanding.

- *Separating the Person From the Problem.*

Personal criticism generally inflames a conflict. Name-calling should be avoided, as should negative trigger words and phrases that lead to defensive behavior – words such as “stupid,” “lazy,” “incompetent,” or phrases such as, “Let me put this in a way that you can understand.” Use “I” statements. These statements are characterized by a non-judgmental description of the behavior (no accusations), description of the behavior's consequences, and your feelings regarding the behavior.

- *Look for Conciliatory Gestures.*

As noted in the December Beacon, these gestures can include such things as apologizing, expressing regret, offering a compromise, expressing empathy, revealing one's own underlying needs and emotional issues, and asking for honest feedback. These gestures, when given and acknowledged, can signal a change in the relationship, and a possible avenue to resolution.

- *Stay Calm – Do Not Respond to Anger With Anger.*
- *Focus on Interests, Not Positions.*

Parties often argue with each other from seemingly incompatible positions – one person wants one thing and the other wants something else. In most relationships, however, there are some mutual interests that both parties want to satisfy. Both, for example, may want a harmonious work environment, or perhaps both are seeking respect from the other person. If the parties can identify these mutual interests, new possibilities for resolution may emerge.

- *Stay With the Issue.*

Step 3 is the heart of the conflict resolution process. If done well, it will lead to meaningful solutions. In the next issue of the Beacon, we will look at the fourth and final step in this process – *Finding a Solution*

## WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

### A Stronger Financial Management System

*By John Korona, OFO  
Telephone: 202-418-8928*

#### *What is LMI?*

Who is LMI and what connection does LMI have with FSIS? If you've been hearing this acronym, you may be wondering. Answers to these questions are fairly easy, yet the impact of the work done by LMI should be of interest to all.

LMI stands for Logistics Management Institute, a not-for-profit consulting group that works with Federal agencies to help them improve their overall financial management capabilities.

#### *Why is LMI Reviewing FSIS Activities?*

During the last several years FSIS has taken a number of steps to modernize its financial operations, including the formation of the Financial Processing Center (FPC).

However, the FSIS goal is not only to modernize our financial management system, but also to build one equal to the best standards used by other organizations. Our financial management system supports our people and our mission; it should be the best it can be.

Early in 2000, Administrator Tom Billy determined that the time was right to have an objective outside group review the steps we have taken and identify any remaining areas for improvement. Therefore, we signed a contract with LMI. From May to September 2000, LMI carried out an extensive review of the Agency's existing financial management operations and controls. First, they went to the people of FSIS. They conducted 27 one-on-one interviews with key employees and held 5 process workshops with 23 financial and program management personnel. They also visited several District Offices and the Financial Processing Center (FPC) in Des Moines.

The LMI staff also gathered information from over 60 documents, including both internal FSIS records and external regulatory materials from other Federal agencies (OMB, GAO, OIG, and Federal Statutes).

#### *LMI Suggests Areas for Improvement.*

This intensive effort resulted in a set of Recommended Improvements and an Implementation Strategy, which LMI presented to the Agency in September 2000. LMI's report included 21 management and process recommendations that were aimed at more closely aligning the Agency's resources with its mission and performance objectives. Their recommendations were based on the common themes of:

- making financial management a priority FSIS-wide;
- redefining the role of finance to better support FSIS' mission;
- incorporating fiscal and performance accountability into all phases of FSIS' operations;
- investing in human capital [people];
- becoming a more "customer-focused" organization; and
- measuring results.

*FSIS Action Plan*

Following a careful review of the report, Mr. Billy asked the Agency's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), with support from the Deputy Administrators, to prepare an action plan to address LMI's recommendations for strengthening our financial management system. Jeanne Axtell is the CFO for FSIS.

The action plan for Fiscal Years 2001 through 2005 has been developed, approved and is now in the early stages of implementation. The action plan includes activities responsive to each of the recommendations in the LMI report. Although the action plan is too long to cover in detail in this column, some key activities underway will:

- clarify financial management roles;
- continue financial management training;
- publish an operations guide for resource managers;
- create and use more meaningful financial measures in the performance reporting system; and
- promote a more customer-focused organization.

So if you hear about or meet co-workers who are working on projects associated with the LMI study, understand that they are involved in a multi-year effort to make the Agency's financial management system equal to the best such systems currently being used by other leading organizations. From time to time, we'll update you on the status of the progress we are making. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me. Copies of the LMI report are available.

**Providing a Continuing Education Program that Works**

*By Robert Williams, Office of Field Operations  
Telephone: 202-418-8884*

January's issue of the Beacon outlined the Office of Field Operations' policies for the FY2001 Continuing Education Program (CEP), designed to reimburse field employees who take college level courses related to the Agency's public health regulatory mission. Mark Mina's December memo described the program in detail.

Funding is allocated on a fiscal year basis for the CEP program, and the program requires that employees obtain prior approval for all courses for which they are requesting reimbursement. Many employees have submitted requests that underestimate the costs of the course, lab, or book. However, in order to ensure that funds are available to reimburse everyone who has requested and received prior approval and to allow the Agency to track reimbursements during the fiscal year, employees should provide detailed, accurate information in their requests. Therefore, employees will only be reimbursed based on the costs they provide when they request approval. Additionally, Reimbursement Form 1164 should be submitted within 30 days of course completion to close out the process.

Some employees have asked whether they can be reimbursed for college level courses in computer instruction. Such courses will not be reimbursed under the CEP. FAIM training is available to all employees and has been found to be adequate for the performance of employees' daily computer-related duties. Also, vendors of computer programs normally supply purchasers with the necessary training materials to adapt to any new programs introduced.

As employees cooperate by following the above guidance, it will allow for more efficient operation of the CEP program. Employees interested in the CEP may contact Eleanor Lewis 202-418-8863 or Ruth Holt, 202-418-8855 on the Resource Management and Planning Staff, for further information and assistance.

**SUPPLIES****New Clipboard a Real Space Saver**

*by Roger Perkerewicz, Administrative Services Division  
Telephone: 303-497-5412 Ext. 247*

The demand for space in field offices for posting mandated documents is getting overwhelming. I would like to suggest for those items relating to safety some relief. Items such as circuit safety committee minutes, record of noise exposure, FSIS Directive 4791.5, Attachment #1, and others, could be put together on one 2-hole clipboard. The cover for these documents

could be the new Safety And Health Poster, also mandated to be posted. A clipboard of this type can now be ordered from the Field Supply Center (FSC). The *Item Number* for this is 3592, and the unit of issue is EA (each).

### Cartridges for New FAIM Printers

*By Pete Bridgeman, Administrative Services Division  
301-504-4222*

There are two new types of printers being distributed with FAIM computers this year, the 350C DeskJet printer and the 720C Office Jet printer. The 350C DeskJet requires a black ink print cartridge that was not previously stocked at the Field Supply Center. That item is now available at FSC. *The Item Number is #1118.* This printer also takes Item #4890 for the color cartridge. The 720C Office Jet takes Item #1190 for the Black Ink cartridge, and Item #4890 for the Color Cartridge. Please note these additions in your catalog.

### Carbonless Paper Now Available

Dr. Juan Rodriguez, Circuit Supervisor in Augusta, ME, sent in the following suggestion:

"Many of the forms we use on a daily basis (Non-Compliance Records, Performance Appraisals) have multiple copies. We now have to print the forms and insert carbon paper between the originals. Could the supply system procure a carbonless paper for us? I've been using carbonless paper in completing some of the electronic forms, and it does save some time!"

Great suggestion, Dr. Rodriguez! "Carbonless Paper", Item Number 1011, Unit of Issue RM (Ream), will be available from the Field Supply Center (FSC) this month.

### Returning Items to the Field Supply Center (FSC)

If you are returning any items to the Field Supply Center (FSC), or having items picked up for return to the FSC, please ensure that you include the order number with the returned items. This ensures that FSIS is credited for the returned items. Also, the FSC asks that you only return items that were sent to you from the FSC. Several recent returns included a number of items that did not come from the FSC, and could not be used at the FSC.

### Hearing Protection - Noise Reduction Ratings

We carry several different types of hearing protection, in a variety of sizes and styles. Below is a comprehensive list of the different types of hearing protection available through the Field Supply Center (FSC), along with the Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) for each style. We will also include the NRR in the revised Supply Catalogue when it is issued in the near future. If you have a preferred type of hearing protection which is not on this list, please contact your Safety Specialist, or myself, with specific information about the type of hearing protection you would prefer. We will make every attempt to make the preferred type of hearing protection available from the FSC.

#### Ear Muffs

- FSIS-04EM (Attach to Bullard Helmets) NRR = 23 dB
- FSIS-12MUFF Bilsom Blue,  
stand-alone sound muffs NRR= 25 dB

#### Foam Plugs

- FSIS-12FOAM Foam, Cordless, (EAR) NRR = 29 dB
- FSIS-71 Yellow Foam, w/Cord, EAR Plugs NRR = 29 dB
- FSIS-12FWC MAXLITE, Green Foam w/Cord NRR = 30 dB
- FSIS-12FMLG MAX, Orange Foam w/Cord NRR = 33 dB

#### Rubberized, Reusable Plugs

- FSIS-12SM PerFit, Corded (Sm-Md) NRR = 26 dB
- FSIS-12LG PerFit, Corded (Md-Lg) NRR = 26 dB
- FSIS-63 Ultra-Fit, corded, one size fits all NRR = 21 dB
- FSIS-11 Perfex - Rigid Folding Band NRR = 22 dB

**Special Pricing Available For Inspection Equipment and Footwear**

The Hantover Company has special pricing available for USDA inspectors for the purchase of inspection equipment items and footwear. This pricing will usually represent a savings of 40% - 50% off the average list price for items, although there will be a \$5 - \$10 shipping fee included for the order. Items available include Knives & Skinners (Forschner, Russell and others), Node Hooks, Steels, Chain Belts, Scabbards and Skid Resistant Footwear. When ordering, you need to identify yourself as a USDA inspector, and refer to special account Number 61378. The toll-free number for ordering equipment from Hantover is 1-800-821-2227.

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH****Inspection Equipment and Clothing**

*By Tom Wright, Administrative Services Division  
Telephone: 301-504-4246*

In the January 2001 edition of the Beacon, we requested field inspection personnel to share information about inspection equipment and clothing that has proven to be highly satisfactory.

Bob Ogan, an OFO inspector in the Albany District, responded with the following information on skid-resistant footwear:

*Husqvarna Rubber Logger Boots,*

Natural rubber sole gives incredible traction on red-meat kill floor. Features include cotton pile lining, ankle guard, heel grip, four-layer insole, and steel toe. Boots are very comfortable when standing for prolonged periods of time.

Cost: Approximately \$68.00. The boots can be purchased from local stores that sell Husqvarna chain saws. On the web, enter <http://www.husqvarna.com> for the location of a dealer nearest you.

Another OFO employee, James Hilderbrant, also from the Albany District, recommends the following skid-resistant footwear:

*Sears Die Hard Work Oxford Boots,*

Wear and skid-resistance are very satisfactory in processing plants. "They are the best safety item I have had to buy."

Cost: Approximately \$75.00 (but Sears on occasion has them on sale for around \$55.00). The Oxfords are available from local Sears stores.

Fred Tancordo from the Beltsville District recommends:

*Shoes for Crews Skid-Resistant Footwear,*

He uses them on slippery wet tile floors, "Very, Very comfortable!" The company claims *Shoes for Crews* grips slippery floors better than any other shoe on the market. They come in men's and women's styles and sizes. The company also makes a PVC work boot. Costs range from \$40.00 to \$70.00 (plus shipping), depending on the style. The footwear can be ordered directly from the company at 1-800-329-0102, by mail order, or at their Web site: [www.shoesforcrews.com](http://www.shoesforcrews.com)

Rhonda Slocumb of the Atlanta District recommends:

*Georgia Boot Footwear,*

The lace up model (#G7664) is being worn by a veterinarian in a poultry plant, and the Wellington model (# G4523) is being worn by a processing inspector in the same plant. The boots are waterproof, durable, with a very good skid resistant sole. The boots are available in women's and men's sizes. The Wellington model is available in different colors and is very comfortable. The lace ups are approximately \$98.00 a pair and the Wellington's are \$105.00 a pair. This is above the allowance for footwear (which is \$70.00), but the comfort is worth the out of pocket expense. E-mail: [www.georgiaboots.com](http://www.georgiaboots.com) for more information and location of Georgia Boot retailers.

David Stuart of the Des Moines District recommends an aluminum knife scabbard manufactured and sold by *Werner Innovative Products*. The scabbard holds two 6-inch knives and the node hook. It has a locking system that holds the knives in place even when the scabbard is inverted, however, the knives remove readily and the scabbard is easy to clean.

The item number is S2KN6. The cost of the scabbard is \$8.00, plus \$5.00 for shipping. The company also has scabbards for one knife, three knives and for 8-inch knives. The scabbard can be ordered from:

*Werner Innovative Products*  
1622 Conard  
Garden City, KS 67846.  
Phone/Fax 316-275-2082.  
E-mail: [www.wwerner@ghnet.com](mailto:www.wwerner@ghnet.com)

We appreciate the input from our field workforce.

### **Safety Forms Update**

A revised FSIS Form 4791-2, "FSIS Circuit Safety and Health Committee Report", is available from the Field Supply Center (FSC). This form is used to report circuit safety and health committee meetings. The revised form, dated 9/11/00, replaces the former FSIS Safety Report form, which is obsolete. The unit of issue for this form is EA.

FSIS Forms 4792-1, "In Case of Emergency", and 4792-2, "Emergency Information Card", are also available from the FSC. The Unit of Issue for each of these forms is also EA.

## **TRAVEL**

### **Travel Letters**

*By James R. Gearhart, Director, Financial Processing Center (FPC)*  
*Telephone: 515-334-2000*

The Financial Management Division's Financial Processing Center (FPC) ceased the issuance of travel notification letters on February 15, 2001. The Department has notified FSIS that the National Finance Center (NFC) would be the single point of notification letters when travel payments (i.e., advances, vouchers, and interest) are processed. This means that the notification letters that have been received from NFC over the past few months will be the only letters that are sent to travelers.

### **Mandatory Use of Travel Management Centers**

*By Dawn Ruffner, Fiscal Services Branch, Budget Division*  
*Telephone: 202-720-2210*

As of January 1, 2001, unless exempt, all employees traveling on official business must use a Government-contracted travel management center (TMC) to make all travel reservations including hotel and car rental arrangements. FSIS has contracted with several TMCs throughout the United States to serve FSIS employees. All travel reservations must be made with the TMC designated for the employee's official duty station.

There are some exemptions to the mandatory use of a TMC for making travel reservations. Field employees traveling to Texas A&M for training will continue to make their reservations through the Texas A&M Training Center. Also, employees do not have to use a TMC for hotel arrangements if a conference or meeting coordinator for a specific event has obtained a block of rooms. In this instance, employees can confirm their rooms by calling the lodging establishment directly but must still use the TMC for any commercial transportation or car rental reservations. For travel situations where only a rental car is needed, employees may deal directly with the appropriate car rental company.

In addition, Field Operations' in-plant inspection employees, circuit supervisors, and compliance personnel are exempt from using the TMC for making hotel reservations when travel itineraries are uncertain. Use of the TMC is still mandatory for hotel reservations at pre-determined destinations (i.e. meetings, conferences, TDY assignments) and for commercial transportation reservations. If exempted, employees must complete block 15, "Total Nights Lodging", and block 16, "Number of Nights in Approved Accommodations Per the Fire Safety Act Standards", of the Travel Voucher.

The mandatory use of a TMC for making hotel reservations was implemented due to the Hotel & Motel Fire Safety Act. Congress passed this Act into law to save lives and protect property by promoting fire and life safety in hotels and motels.

The law mandates that federal employees on travel must stay in fire safe accommodations. The U.S. Fire Administration maintains a database of all properties that meet fire safety requirements for hard-wired smoke detectors and an automatic sprinkler system in each guestroom (properties 3 stories or lower in height are exempt from the sprinkler requirements). By mandating the use of a TMC for making hotel reservations, the federal government has put the burden of compliance with this law on the TMCs. The TMC has the responsibility for knowing the law's requirements, accessing the database of fire safe accommodations, and booking rooms that comply with the Hotel & Motel Fire Safety Act. Even though we must use a TMC for making our hotel reservations, the TMC does not mandate where an employee must stay. If employees have a preferred lodging site, they can request this hotel/motel when making the reservation with the TMC. As long as the employees' preference is a fire safe accommodation, the TMC will make the reservation at the site of your choice. The TMC will also ensure that reservations are made with hotels and motels whose prices are under the established per diem rates.

Use of a TMC for making travel reservations is also cost effective for the federal government. The TMC has access to government contracted airline rates that average a discount of 69 percent off of full walk-up fares. These airline fares do not change during the fiscal year and allow for non-stop service in over 95 percent of the market. The government contracted fares that the TMCs book require no advance purchase, no length of stay requirement, are fully refundable, and don't incur fees for cancellations or schedule changes.

Making car rental reservations through the TMC is another area where federal employees benefit. The TMC also has access to government contracted car rental rates. These car rental fares do not change during the fiscal year and allow for unlimited mileage. The government contracted fares that the TMCs book include collision damage insurance at no extra cost to the employee.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### Post-1956 Military Service Purchase Alert!

*By HRFO, Benefits & Workers Comp  
Telephone: 800-370-3747*

January 1, 1957, was the date the military went under Social Security. Since Government civilian employment allows for military service to be credited toward civilian retirement (with certain exceptions), a conflict arose concerning military service performed after December 31, 1956. Because it was earned under Social Security, it couldn't also be credited to Civil Service - if the veteran became eligible for Social Security. The solution was to allow you to buy this military time so you would be able to count it under Civil Service as well as Social Security.

Procedures to accomplish this have been in place for several years. If you were first hired before October 1, 1982, and will not become eligible for Social Security by age 62, you do not need to make the military service deposit. If you served in the military prior to January 1, 1957, you also do not need to make the deposit for the period of service which preceded January 1, 1957. If you have any questions about this, contact your Servicing Personnel Offices in Washington, DC (headquarters) and Minneapolis, Minnesota (field) for assistance.

### Did You Know There Is a New Law That May Affect Your Retirement Benefits?

On September 19, 2000, President Clinton signed an important piece of legislation that may affect you. The legislation is called the Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Correction Act (FERCCA), and it affects employees who were in the wrong retirement plan for at least 3 years of service after December 31, 1996. If this is you, we need to hear from you. Your benefits staff is available to provide assistance. You may contact any of the specialists at 1-800-370-3747, and talk with:

Celeste Gatz (ext. 2543),  
Pat Orth (ext. 2544),  
Marcie Noyes (ext. 2553), or  
Linda Becker (ext. 2551)

Despite our extensive efforts to find and correct retirement coverage errors, we know there are still some employees in the wrong retirement plan. Even though you were never told that you were in the wrong retirement plan—you could be and not

know it. The section *How Do I Know if I'm in the Right Retirement Plan?* below will help you figure out if you might be in the wrong plan.

#### *How Can FERCCA Help Me?*

If you were in the wrong retirement plan for at least 3 years of service after December 31, 1986, FERCCA can help you in one or more of the following ways:

- You may have an opportunity to choose another retirement plan;
- You may be reimbursed for certain out-of-pocket expenses you paid as a result of a coverage error;
- You may benefit from certain changes in the rules about how some of your Government service counts toward retirement; and,
- You may be able to make up contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and get make-up earnings on those contributions as well.

#### *What Do I Need to Do Now?*

If your employing human resources office has not already contacted you personally about an error in your retirement coverage, please contact the benefits staff in that office. Your agency can enter your name to a FERCCA database that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has established on its web site at <http://www.opm.gov/benefits/correction>. If you prefer, however, you can add your name to this database yourself.

#### *What Will Happen Next?*

OPM has set up a plan to help everyone who is entitled to relief under FERCCA. It includes:

- Identifying employees affected by FERCCA and establishing a database;
- Gathering information on those employees from personnel and payroll records and other sources;
- Verifying employees' options under FERCCA; and,
- Helping employees who have a choice of retirement plans to make informed decisions.

If you have a choice of retirement plans, you will receive an in-depth comparison of your benefits under each option. This comparison will include how much you can expect to receive under each retirement plan, including Social Security and TSP benefits. OPM will provide you with an opportunity for one-on-one personal assistance to help you weigh your options. This individual assistance will be available to anyone who has a choice under FERCCA. OPM is working to implement this counseling service as quickly as possible, beginning on June 1, 2001, or sooner.

If you have any questions concerning your retirement plan or FERCCA, please contact your bureau or agency benefits staff.

To monitor OPM's progress in implementing FERCCA, visit its error correction web site at <http://www.gov/benefits/correction>. You can also sign up to receive updates directly by email. You can access the email subscription list by clicking on the "Subscribe to Email List" link on OPM's web site.

#### *How Do I Know if I'm in the Right Retirement Plan?*

Which retirement plan you belong in depends upon the type of appointment you have and your work history. The rules can be complicated, which is why some employees are in the wrong plan.

Most employees who started working for the Government after 1983 should be in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Those who started working for the Government on a permanent basis before 1984 should be in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), unless they elected FERS or left Government employ for a while. When errors in retirement coverage occur, they often involve situations where an employee has breaks in Government service or changes in types of appointment.

Below are some of the common errors in coverage, broken down by retirement plan. First, find your current retirement plan, then see if you fit into any of the situations listed. Look at Block 430 on your most recent Standard Form 50, Notification of Personnel Action, if you don't know your retirement plan. If you fit one of the situations listed, you may be in the wrong plan. Note, however, there are exceptions to the general rules. You may be in the right retirement plan because you fall under one of the exceptions (like the one shown below under CSRS Offset). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your bureau or agency benefits staff.

*If your retirement plan is CSRS, then you may be in the wrong plan if you:*

- Worked for the Government before 1984, but not on a permanent basis; or
- Left Federal employment for more than a year at any time after 1983.

*If your retirement plan is CSRS or CSRS Offset, then you may be in the wrong plan if you:*

- Have a temporary appointment limited to a year or less, a term appointment, or any emergency indefinite appointment, or
- Have no Federal civilian employment before 1984; or
- Do not have a career or career conditional appointment and you work on an intermittent basis. (See the work schedule block on your SF-50).

*If your retirement plan is CSRS Offset, then you may be in the wrong plan if you:*

- Did not work for the Government for a total of 5 years before 1987. (Don't count your military service).

(Exception: if you worked under CSRS, left the Government, and your agency placed you in CSRS Offset on your return, your CSRS Offset coverage is probably correct if you had 5 years of Government when you left).

*If your retirement plan is FERS, then you may be in the wrong plan if you:*

- Have a temporary appointment limited to a year or less; or
- Do not have a career or career conditional appointment and you work on an intermittent basis; or
- Have worked for the Government under a retirement plan continuously since 12/31/83, unless you elected to transfer to FERS during the 1987 or 1988 FERS Open Seasons.

### **Changing Your TSP Funds ?????**

As government employees we deal with forms, forms and more forms. Its easy to get them confused. Because some TSP forms are only applicable during the Open Seasons (May through July and November through January), here's a reminder as to which form to use when.

TSP-1 is used to change future allocations or fund distribution from your paycheck. It is a green form (we cannot accept copies) and must be processed by the Human Resources Division. These forms are used only during the Open Season periods.

TSP-30 is the Interfund Transfer form and changes all of the money you have already saved in the TSP to whatever funds (the G fund - Government Securities; the F fund - Fixed Income Index fund and the C fund -Common Stock fund) as you so designate on the form. This form may be used to change funds once a month. It should be mailed directly to the TSP Operations office by the 15th of the month in order to be effective at the end of that month. The address is on the form. Interfund transfers can also be accomplished by using the TSP Thriftline; 504-255-8777. It is not a toll free call but this line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Employees are authorized to use their work phone on a reasonable basis.

To use the Thriftline to transfer your monies among the funds, you do need to know your Personal Identification Number (PIN). This number was deleted from the TSP statements in 1996. If you don't have an old statement with your PIN listed and cannot remember it, you can call the Thriftline and ask them to send it to you.

As a recap:

TSP-1 is for future payroll actions and must be mailed to:

*USDA: FSIS: HRFO  
Butler Square West, 4th Floor  
100 North 6th St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55403*

TSP-30 is for an Interfund Transfer to allocate to different funds the money you have already saved. Mail to the TSP (address is on the form).

## Post-Employment Restrictions

*By Human Resources Field Office Telephone: 612-370-2000*

All individuals separating from federal employment are covered by specific restrictions on certain post-employment activities as detailed in the "Ethics Reform Act of 1989" (18 U.S.C. 207). Supervisors and separating employees should be aware that a general guide addressing these restrictions is included in a package of pertinent information forwarded by the Servicing Personnel Office to all separating employees. Specific questions which may arise from a review of this guide should be directed to the proper authority identified in the guide.

### 30 Percent Disabled Vet?

Employees who are designated by the Department of Veterans Affairs as 30 percent or more compensably disabled must make sure the VA letter which states this designation is maintained in the Official Personnel Folder (OPF) and is no more than one year old. The Human Resources Division periodically reviews the OPF's of compensably disabled veterans to make sure VA letters reflect a current date. Written follow-up and a grace period to obtain an updated letter is provided to employees who have out-of-date letters.

### Performance Appraisal Ratings (M-Z, Grade 1-12 Employees)

Remember that April 30 is the closing date for the performance appraisal rating cycle for Grade 1-12 employees whose last name begins with M-Z. Employees are to be rated on the FSIS-4430-5 forms, which were signed by the employees and supervisors last year. All ratings for this cycle should be completed no later than May 31, 2001.

The new performance appraisal rating cycle for these employees begins on May 1, 2001 and ends April 30, 2002. New elements and standards should be put in place within 30 days after the beginning of the appraisal period or after an employee's assignment to a new position. To establish new elements and standards for this appraisal rating cycle, complete FSIS Form 4430-5, for employees covered by User's Guides. For employees NOT covered by a User's Guide, establish new elements and standards by completing a FSIS Form 4430-6 for each element and FSIS Form 4430-5 as a cover sheet.

(For Bargaining Unit Employees, Please Note: The Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article XXI, Section B, states that "periodic reviews between a bargaining unit employee and the rating supervisor shall take place every 4 months during the appraisal period. One of these reviews shall coincide with the discussion of the annual performance rating." Therefore, supervisors should remember to include this final review when conducting the annual performance appraisal with the employee.)

### FSIS Directive 3820.3, "Payment Of Relocation Allowances For In-Plant Shortage Locations"

Recently an FSIS Directive was issued which provides information on the payment of relocation allowances for employees who transfer, at the same grade level to permanent in-plant positions in shortage locations. Specifically, employees will receive travel and relocation payments for reassignments or transfers, at the same grade level, from one duty station to the another station that is outside the employee's commuting area if the new duty station is an in-plant location which presently has a severe shortage of candidates. A shortage area is defined as one where recruitment incentives are needed as a result of numerous unsuccessful attempts to fill positions in that location.

The shortage location reassignment procedure is separate from the voluntary reassignment system and does not replace it. The voluntary reassignment system will continue to be operated by the Human Resources Field Office (HRFO) in Minneapolis. Relocation allowances will not be paid when the employee submits a voluntary reassignment application for an in-plant position that is NOT in a shortage location, or when the reassignment is from a position in one shortage location to another shortage location.

To indicate your availability for an assignment to a shortage location, submit a Form FSIS 4335-3, for those locations only, directly to the District office where the position is located. The District Office continues to maintain the authority to make the final selection decision and, as a result, may make selections from other sources (e.g. an OPM certificate), in addition to this process.

Currently the following locations are determined to be shortage areas:

Food Inspectors GS-7:

New Holland, PA  
Albany and Robards, KY;  
Moorefield WV;  
Winesburg, OH;  
Plainwell, MI;  
Arcadia, Norwalk, and Milwaukee, WI;  
Waterloo, Marshalltown and Ottumwa, IA;  
Livingston, Hanford CA;  
Athens, Camilla, Carrollton, Cumming, Dalton, Douglas, Ellijay, Gainesville, Marietta, Pine Mountain Valley, Perry, and Murrayville GA;  
Chatanooga, Morristown and Shelbyville, TN;  
Ashland, Athens, Trussville, and Russellville, AL;  
Summit, MS;  
Ferndale, Mt Vernon and Kelso, WA;  
Ft. Morgan and Greeley CO;  
Hyrum, UT;  
Monroe and Wilkesboro, NC; Booker, Cactus, Plainview, Bryan, Dallas, Carthage, Mt Pleasant, Center and Friona, TX;  
Grand Island and Lexington, NE;  
Dodge City, Garden City, Holcomb and Liberal, KS  
Tolleson, AZ

Veterinary Medical Officers GS-11 and/or 12:

Amarillo, Cactus, Friona, Malone, Plainview, TX  
Eureka and Hanford CA  
Loganton, PA  
Plainwell, MI  
Barron, Madison and Franklin WI  
Buena Vista, Claxton and Douglas GA  
All locations in North Carolina  
All locations in South Carolina  
All locations in Iowa and Nebraska

We will continue to update this list through regular Beacon articles. The above locations have been designated as shortage locations through January 30, 2002. At that time, the locations will be reevaluated to determine whether the designation is still applicable and if relocation allowances will continue to be paid.

For more information, please refer to FSIS Directive on Relocation (3820.1), this directive (3820.3) or contact your servicing personnel specialist in HRFO at 1-800-370-3747

**FSIS Personnel Fax Request Service**

A "fax on demand" service is available through the Human Resources Field Office (HRFO) to provide employees, offices, and members of the public with personnel forms, documents, and other printed information, by fax. The Personnel Fax Request Service provides automated access to over 70 documents, including all field and headquarters vacancy announcements, all forms needed to apply for entry-level Food Inspector and VMO jobs, an HRFO phone directory, and many FSIS, SF, OF, and other forms. The Personnel Fax Request Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can be reached by calling **1-800-370-3747** and entering **2002**.

The first step in obtaining documents from the Service is to obtain the index listing of all documents currently available. This listing shows the name of each document, the number of pages, and the index number needed to retrieve it from the Service. The index listing can be obtained by calling the Fax Request Service and following the voice prompts to have a copy of the index sent to the caller's fax machine. The index listing is updated every Tuesday to include all new vacancy announcements. The final step is to identify the index numbers of the desired announcements or documents, call the Service back, and follow the voice prompts to have those documents faxed out. The Personnel Fax Request Service allows callers to receive up to three documents per call.

This fax-on-demand system is normally very reliable. However, callers occasionally have questions or problems. Some of the more typical questions include:

*a) The fax-on-demand system's phone rings but doesn't answer the call.*

Often this is because all 4 phone lines into and out of the system are busy, and the system doesn't generate a busy signal. The system is particularly busy on Tuesdays, the day when new vacancy announcements are added. Callers should call back later if the system fails to answer.

*b) The system doesn't say what documents are available.*

Some callers expect to hear a listing of all available documents read to them over the phone by the system. Unfortunately, because of the large number of documents available, this is not practical. Instead, the system will fax a list, called an "index list" to callers. The index list is a list of all documents available in the system, and the index number needed to retrieve each one.

*c) The requested document fails to arrive at the caller's fax machine.*

Requested documents are automatically faxed out immediately, or as soon as a phone line is available. They rarely take more than 45 minutes to arrive. The system attempts to fax documents to the caller's fax number three times, and then discontinues fax attempts. The system's log indicates that most instances of documents not arriving at the caller's fax result from 1) busy signal on the caller's fax machine, 2) no answer on the caller's fax machine, and 3) a voice answers the number the caller left for the system to send faxes to. Callers should be careful to enter the correct fax number, and may need to call back if their fax machine is busy or off line. Callers may report persistent or unusual problems to HRFO at the "800" number listed above.

### **January/February 2001 Retirements**

Anthony A. Alvarado, CSI, OFO, Vernon, CA, 02/10/01, 13 years  
B.N. Bhargava, SVMO, OPPDE, Washington, DC, 12/30/00, 25 years  
Dorothy J. Culver, FI-S, OFO, Cullman, AL, 02/01/01, 11 years  
James M. Harris, CSI, OFO, Mount Olive, NC, 01/27/01, 42 years  
Anna R. Hasinsky, Prtg Clerk, OM, Beltsville, MD, 01/03/01, 30 years  
Cesar Heyliger, CSI, OFO, Newberry, SC, 02/10/01, 7 years  
John L. Knight, SVMO, OFO, San Angelo, TX, 01/27/01, 11 years  
Earline Leeth, FI-S, OFO, Cullman, AL, 01/26/01, 27 years  
Donald G. Lyon, SVMO, OFO, Abbotsford, WI, 01/31/01, 19 years  
Mohamed A. Mohanna, VMO, Washington, DC, 01/27/01, 24 years  
Arthur H. Monckton, CSI, OFO, Stockton, CA, 02/03/01, 34 years  
Edith L. Montgomery, CSI, OFO, Hickory, KY, 01/31/01, 27 years  
Gregory J. Peterson, SVMO, Long Prairie, MN, 02/03/01, 27 years  
Jesse D. Privett, CSI, OFO, Plainview, TX, 01/31/01, 32 years  
Marcia G. Putman, FI-S, OFO, Athens, AL, 02/10/01, 21 years  
Kenneth O. Tuttle, FI-S, OFO, Sedalia, MO, 01/26/01, 20 years  
Leo Williams, CSI, OFO, Fresno, CA, 01/31/01, 29 years

### **Rotational Assignment Program**

*By Shirley Miller, Organization & Employee Development Branch  
Telephone: 202-720-8540*

We first featured an article about the Rotational Assignment Program (RAP) in the October, 2000 issue of the Beacon. For those of you who may have missed that article you are probably wondering "what is RAP?" RAP is a developmental opportunity that was announced to all FSIS GS-14 and GS-15 level employees to work in the Office of the Under Secretary or the Office of the Administrator on a 60-day assignment. These assignments are structured to develop core leadership competencies, while allowing the employees to gain visibility and first-hand experience in how Agency decisions are made at the executive level.

At this time, we are pleased to announce that twelve employees have been selected to participate in RAP during this calendar year. Employees selected and the dates They will be on their rotational assignment are as follows:

<u>RAP Assignee</u>	<u>Assignment Period</u>	<u>RAP Assignee</u>	<u>Assignment Period</u>
Mark Reichenbacher, OM (DC)	12/11-2/16	Scott Safian, OFO (DC)	5/27 - 7/21
Karen Benham, OM (MN)	2/4 - 3/31	Louis Leny, OFO (IL)	7/22 - 9/15
Cheryl Oros, OPPDE (DC)	2/4 - 3/31	Michael Donovan, OPPDE (DC)	7/22 - 9/15
Barbara Masters, OFO (NE)	4/1 - 5/26	Ron Jones, OFO (CO)	9/16 - 11/10
Joan Collins, OFO (DC)	4/1 - 5/26	Gerri Ransom, OPHS (DC)	9/16 - 11/10
Ron Eckel, OFO (NE)	5/27 - 7/21	Patricia Abraham, OPHS (DC)	9/11- 1/5/02

During an employee's assignment period, the assignee will be physically located in Washington, DC. Their priority during this time is full participation in the RAP project to which they are assigned. While on assignment, the assignee's normal post-of-duty responsibilities will be delegated to other employees.

Although this is the first time this type of program has been offered within FSIS, it is our intention to announce this program annually. GS-14 and GS-15 level employees are encouraged to apply the next time this opportunity is offered. If you have any questions about the program, please contact Shirley Miller in the Organization and Employee Development Branch on 202-720-8542.

### Leave Transfer Recipients

1. Jackie Copeland, OFO, DC; Illness
2. Annie Stewart, POB, MN; Serious Illness
3. Linda Cole, OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness
4. Linda Carey, EMS, DC; Surgery
5. Betty Morgan, OFO, AR; Family Illness
6. Carolyn Woolfolk, OFO, DC; Family Illness
7. OFO-99-0027, OFO, NC, Surgery
8. Tammy Love, OFO, AR; Surgery
9. Sue Engels, OFO, IA; Family Illness
10. Aurbrey Tribble, OFO, FL; Serious Illness
11. John French, OFO, GA; Family Illness
12. Clement Grangier, OFO, MD; Serious Illness
13. OFO-00-0006, OFO, AL, Illness
14. Randy Haggard, OFO, TX; Serious illness
15. Eusebio Galindo, OFO, TX; Serious Illness
16. Becky Schneider, OFO, CO; Illness
17. OFO-00-0030, OFO, WV; Surgery
18. OFO-00-0034, OFO, NJ; Surgery
19. Jerry Castleberry, OFO, GA; Surgery
20. Beverly Winston, OFO, GA; Maternity
21. Barbara Males, OFO, NY; Serious Illness
22. Donald Palmer, OFO, KS; Family Illness
23. OFO-00-0042, OFO, AL; Surgery
24. Leslie Buzzell, OFO, ME; Surgery
25. Stephanie Kane, OPPDE, DC; Surgery
26. Lula Wallace, OPPDE, DC; Maternity
27. Margarita Fiol, OFO, PR; Illness
28. Lois Mullens, OFO, AL; Serious Illness
29. Dolores Bradley-Vargas, OFO, GA; Serious Illness
30. Janet O'Byrne, OFO, MN; Serious Illness
31. George Touns, OFO, LA; Serious Illness
32. Kelly Mitchell, OFO, DC; Serious Illness
33. Tammy Bergerson, OFO, MO; Surgery
34. Rosie Stephenson, OFO, TX; Serious Illness
35. Geraldine Woods, OFO, TX; Surgery
36. Sheila Mote, OFO, NC; Surgery
37. Wilma Hoch, OFO, IA; Surgery
38. Frances Flecher, OFO, MN; Surgery
39. Wynne Molloy, OFO, AR; Serious Illness
40. Linda Reohr, OFO, NY; Surgery
41. Linda Kendrick, OFO, AR; Surgery
42. Sandra Wasserman, OM, MN; Serious Illness
43. Steven Casey, OFO, WA; Serious Illness
44. Timothy Trogdon, OFO, PA; Family Illness
45. Melanie Norman, OFO, TX; Serious Illness
46. Jesse Privett, OFO, TX; Surgery
47. James Kile, OFO, NE; Surgery
48. Annetta Turner, OFO, DC; Surgery
49. Osmar Ponce, OFO, CA; Surgery
50. Marvin Miller, OFO, NE; Surgery

\*While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain LTP recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP should be referred to HRFO at 1-800-370-3747 for field employees, and to the Classification and Compensation Branch for HQ employees at 202-720-6287.

### THURSDAY REPORT

**Thursday Report Reader Survey**

*Mary Katherine Jeffers, Executive Management Staff  
Office of the Administrator  
Telephone: 202-720-4655*

To fine-tune the *Thursday Report*, I recently conducted a survey of readers and asked what type of news or information would be of interest to the readers. The responses included the following topics: information concerning the Consumer Safety Officer positions and how someone can qualify for this type of position; educational and training opportunities available for inspectors; HACCP; union negotiations; and, benefits available to you. Other responses suggested that follow-up information be provided on articles that had been previously reported. We will follow-up with the suggestions and provide the information you have indicated is important to you through improvements to the *Thursday Report*, or through other communication vehicles such as the Beacon. The *Thursday Report* mission is to provide managers, supervisors and employees with relevant news and information on a timely basis. The survey was disseminated as an attachment to the December 7 and 14, 2000, issues. The *Thursday Report* distribution list includes faxed copies to 23 major field offices and is included as a Microsoft Outlook sub-folder under Newsletters. The report is sent out to 56 employees. From this distribution list 25 responses were received. The majority of respondents indicated that the length of the articles and the *Thursday Report* itself were a satisfactory length.

Readers who responded indicated that the most important sections of the newsletter to you are the Public Health, Employee Issues and the Pathogen Reduction and HACCP sections. I will be looking for ways to respond to your suggestions. In the meantime, comments and questions are always welcome. If you would like to receive the Thursday Report by e-mail each week, please contact me by e-mail on Outlook (Mary Jeffers), by fax at 202-205-0158, or telephone at 202-720-4655.

**ISSUANCES****Recent Agency Issuances**

*By Corinne Calhoun, Administrative Services Division  
Telephone: 301-504-4233*

The following notices and directives have been issued since the February 2001 edition of The Beacon. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" Lan Intranet server (<\\Dchqoms1\fsisapps\pcdials\pcdials.htm>) and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 5-01 (1/24/01)

District Manager Responsibilities in Assessing an Establishment's Response to a "Notice of Intended Enforcement" (NOIE)

Notice 6-01 (1/24/01)

Meat and Poultry Food Chemistry Samples

Notice 7-01 (1/31/01)

Annual Notice of Right to Request Union Representation

Notice 8-01 (2/7/01)

FSIS Representation on the Inter-Agency Residue Control Group

Notice 9-01 (2/8/01)

Prompt Payment of Travel Claims

Notice 10-01 (2/13/01)

Change in Mileage Rates

Directive 1050.1 (2/14/01)

Requesting Participation at Meetings and Events Outside of Washington, DC

Directive 1240.1, Revision 4 (2/14/01)

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Communicating with External Entities

Directive 1510.1 (1/25/01)  
Equal Opportunity Notification on Material for the Public

Directive 3820.3 (1/29/01)  
Payment of Relocation Allowances for In-Plant Shortage Locations

Directive 10,240.2, Revision 1, Amendment 1 (1/24/01)  
Microbial Sampling of Ready-to-Eat (RTE) Products

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from:

USDA FSIS ASD PMS  
MAILDROP 5241  
5601 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE  
BELTSVILLE MD 20705-5241  
Telephone: 301-504-4242  
Fax: 301-504-4277

**To comment on this newsletter or to submit an article for publication, please contact:**

**Pete Bridgeman, Editor, *The Beacon***

**USDA, FSIS, OM**

**Mail Drop 5230**

**5601 Sunnyside Avenue**

**Beltsville, MD 20705-5250**

**Tel: 301-504-4222**

**Fax: 301-504-4231**

**[peter.bridgeman@usda.gov](mailto:peter.bridgeman@usda.gov)**

The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically in the "Newsletters" public folder on the Exchange (Outlook) mail system as well as on the FSIS Website at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm)

## Attachment 1

**Thrift Savings Plan  
C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns**  
Updated February 8, 2001

Months	C Fund	S&P 500 Stock Index	F Fund	Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	G Fund
<b>1996</b> (Jan. - Dec.)	<b>22.85%</b>	22.96%	<b>3.66%</b>	3.63%	<b>6.76%</b>
<b>1997</b> (Jan. - Dec.)	<b>33.17%</b>	33.36%	<b>9.60%</b>	9.65%	<b>6.77%</b>
<b>1998</b> (Jan. - Dec.)	<b>28.44%</b>	28.58%	<b>8.70%</b>	8.69%	<b>5.74%</b>
<b>1999</b> (Jan. - Dec.)	<b>20.95%</b>	21.04%	<b>(0.85%)</b>	(0.82%)	<b>5.99%</b>
<b>2000</b> (Jan. - Dec.)	<b>(9.14)%</b>	(9.10)%	<b>11.67%</b>	11.63%	<b>6.42%</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
February	(1.93)	(1.89)	1.22	1.21	.53
March	9.74	9.78	1.32	1.32	.55
April	(2.98)	(3.01)	(0.29)	(0.29)	.52
May	(2.05)	(2.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	.54
June	2.44	2.47	2.07	2.08	.53
July	(1.56)	(1.56)	0.89	0.91	.53
August	6.19	6.21	1.46	.145	.52
September	(5.27)	(5.28)	.64	.63	.49
October	(0.40)	(0.42)	.66	.66	.51
November	(7.87)	(7.88)	1.65	1.64	.48
December	0.50	0.49	1.86	1.86	.48
<b>2001</b>					
January	3.55	3.55	1.65	1.63	.46
<b>Last 12 Months *</b>	<b>(0.93)</b>	<b>(0.90)</b>	<b>13.90</b>	<b>13.82</b>	<b>6.32</b>

Percentages in ( ) are negative.

The C Fund is invested in the Barclays Equity Index Fund, which tracks the S&P 500 stock index. The F Fund is invested in the Barclays U.S. Debt Index Fund, which tracks the Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate bond index. The G Fund is invested in special issues of U.S. Treasury securities.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent net earnings for the month, after deduction of accrued administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The C, F, and G Fund monthly returns are dollar-weighted: they reflect net earnings on the changing balances invested during the month.

\* The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

The C and F Fund returns vary from the index returns because of C and F Fund expenses, changing balances in the C and F Funds, and differences in returns between the Barclays funds and the underlying indexes. The index returns are time-weighted: they assume constant dollar balances invested during each month and throughout the period.

Future performance of the three funds will vary and may be significantly different from the returns shown above. See the "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan" for detailed information about the funds and their investment risks.

## Attachment 2

**Minneapolis, MN Field Office Contacts***Please dial 612-370-2010 or 800-370-3747 plus extension***Human Resources Field Office (HRFO)****Western Section - Districts 1, 2, 3, 5 & 8***(Covers Guam, Am. Samoa, HI, AK, CA, WA, OR, ID, NV, TX, UT, AZ, CO NM, IA, NE & FPC, CRD & OM Secys)*

2025	Louise Fox	2538	Doreece Lawrence
2504	Jill Kubina	2578	Yvonne Martin
2513	Bob Kordosky	2583	Tom Johnson
2526	Barbara Walton	2586	Dawn Moser-Karstens
2530	Susan Sullivan	2591	Jeanne Horn

**Northeastern Section - Districts 9, 12, 13, 15 & 16***(Covers WI, MI, ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, PA, DE, MD, NJ, DC, VA, NC, SC, & TSC, Computer positions)*

2068	Steve Prochnow	2522	Terry Rider
2506	Bob Kennerknecht	2527	Diane Lozinski
2508	Roxanne Preuss	2532	Lori Heath
2510	Kelly Bryan	2556	Bridget O'Connor
2517	Penny Carter	2589	Donna Gaunitz

**Central Section - Districts 4, 6, 7 & 10***(Covers MN, ND, SD, MT, WY, KS, MO, AR, OK, LA, IL, IN, HRFO & LERD)*

2273	Mavis Harrison	2567	Tom Lehner
2514	Sandy Cox	2577	Rick Traetow
2524	Sue Robillard	2580	Keith McFarlin
2531	Yvonne Stols	2587	Mark Ford
2536	Pattie Patterson	2593	Michelle Jacobson
2559	Terry Evan		

**Southeast Section - Districts 11, 17 & 18***(Covers OH, KY, WV, GA, FL, MS, TN, AL, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, OPHS Labs & Safety)*

2069	David Reedstrom	2525	Carolyn Peterson
2505	Charlene Baker	2546	Dianne Kaldun
2515	Ellen Barbeck	2554	Mary Lewis
2516	Valerie Yarbrough	2582	Karen Gorr
2520	Mary Davis		

**Systems Section**

2019	Tom Reimler	2537	LenNore Rassett
2015	Tammi Malmer (TDD)	2541	Linda Hicke
2518	Sandra Wasserman	2555	Cathy Strub
2519	Vacant	2557	Joyce Woelfel
2521	Jim Nelson	2558	Shannon Rofick
2528	Bonnie Falk	2572	Darcy Long
2529	Joan Dick	2575	Gwen Olson
2534	Becki Gunderson	2614	Gina Williams
2536	Vacant		

**Administrative Section**

2053	Karen Benham	2535	Nancy Bieber
2058	Jim Duoos	2561	Crystal Gagnon
2501	Deb Sullivan	2585	Melissa Fierke
2503	Jolene Johnson	2590	Jill Savoren
2511	Jody Kimura	2609	Mary Weber
2512	Kamir Carrillo	2610	Sherri Vigness

**Information Technology Section**

2052	Dave Costanzo	2533	Eric Carrier
2502	Alan Lilly	2576	Josh Schlueter

**Recruitment**

2570	Julaine Schmidt
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**Employee Relations, Labor and Employee Relations Division**

2003	Joan Carlson	2542	Vacant
2507	Debbie Thompson	2550	Jodi Foley
2509	Vacant	2560	Jack Meyer
2539	Milo Christianson	2565	Jackie Mammen
2540	Gerry Krogman		

**Fax Numbers**

2005	Administrative	2070	Employee Relations
2007	Central	2375	Benefits & Workers' Comp
2013	Pay	2376	Northeast
2060	Systems	2377	Western
2062	Southeast		

Attachment 3

## Benefits and Workers Compensation Defines New Teams

*Benefits and Workers Compensation Section  
Brenda Fisher, Section Chief, Ext. 2037  
Butler Square West, Suite 420C  
100 North Sixth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55403*

*New Teams  
Effectively Immediately  
Telephone: 800-370-3747*

### Western Section

*(covers Guam, AM Samoa, HI, AK, CA, WA,  
OR, ID, NV, TX, UT, AZ, CO, NM, IA, NE & FPC)*  
Pat Orth, Benefits Specialist, ext. 2544  
Burt Housman, Benefits Assistant, ext. 2548  
Karen Werronen, Workers Comp Tech, ext. 2579

### Central Section

*(covers MN, ND, SD, MT, WY, KS,  
MO, AR, OK, LA, IL, IN & HRFO)*  
Marcie Noyes, Benefits Specialist, ext. 2553  
Andrea Hokeness, Benefits Assistant, ext. 2584  
Anne Stewart, Workers Comp Tech, ext. 2601

### Northeastern Section

*(covers WI, MI, ME, NH, VT, RI, CT, NY  
PA, DE, MD, NJ, DC, VA, NC, SC, & TSC)*  
Linda Becker, Benefits Specialist, ext. 2551  
Renee Doughty, Benefits Assistant, ext. 2545  
Wahidah Seraaj-Klug, Workers Comp Tech, ext. 2523

### Southeast Section

*(covers OH, KY, WV, GA, FL, MS,  
TN, AL, PR, VI, & OPHS Labs)*  
Celeste Gatz, Benefits Specialist, ext. 2523  
Vacant, Benefits Assistant, ext.  
Sandy Suckow-Voss, Workers Comp Tech, ext. 2549

## Case Management

Kay Caron, Case Management Specialist, ext. 2547